

What starts the whole process?

According to the disclosure law, your organization becomes a political committee when you first have the expectation of receiving contributions or making expenditures in support of, or opposition to, any candidate or any ballot proposition.

When does a committee register?

A political committee that organizes *within the last three weeks before an election in which it will participate* must file a C-1pc within three business days of organization or when the committee first has the expectation of receiving contributions or making expenditures in the election campaign.

A political committee that organizes more than three weeks before the election registers within two weeks of forming a committee or expecting to receive or spend funds (whichever occurs first), every political committee must file a [registration statement \(C-1pc\)](#) with the PDC.

Which committees file disclosure reports?

Washington State political committees that raise and spend money to influence certain elections must register and report in accordance with the Public Disclosure Law. A political committee is any person, group, club, organization or collection of individuals (except a candidate or individual dealing with his or her own funds) expecting to receive contributions or make expenditures in support of or in opposition to any candidate or ballot proposition, including annexation and incorporations ballot issues. Although a group may be a civic, social or professional organization primarily, it also may be a political committee if it accepts contributions specifically for use in election campaigns.

A political committee is exempt from reporting if its sole purpose is to support or oppose a local ballot measure in a town or district that had fewer than 1,000 registered voters as of the last general election.

A committee headquartered outside of Washington State and registered in a state other than Washington has a disclosure requirement if it spends over \$50 to influence Washington State elections, but it may qualify to report select information as an out-of-state committee if [certain criteria](#) are met.

Where are forms and instructions?

Committees should [file electronically](#). For help in determining what to report, see the [Political Committee Instructions](#).

The PDC offers free compliance and ORCA training — find dates and classes on the PDC's [online calendar](#). If you can't make to one of our classes, view videos of them [online](#).

Where do I file PDC reports?

File all campaign reports (the “C” series) with the PDC. There is no county filing requirement. By local ordinance, some political committees may also have to file copies of “C” reports with their city clerk. Committees supporting or opposing City of Seattle ballot measures, for example, register with the [Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission](#) and report contributions and expenditures there as well as to the PDC.

When are contribution and expenditure reports due?

C-3 Contribution Reports: Before June 1 of the election year, committees fill out a C-3 report for each bank deposit and file these reports with their C-4 reports. Beginning June 1, each deposit must be reported no later than the following Monday. Since contributions must be deposited within 5 business days of receipt, active campaigns will make at least one weekly deposit.

C-4 Summary Reports: This report, along with its attached schedules, summarizes the committee's financial activity and shows itemized expenditures for a specific period. C-4s are due:

- Monthly from the beginning of the campaign through May of the election year. If a campaign has over \$200 in contributions or expenditures during a month, a C-4 report is filed by the 10th of the following month.
- Starting in June of the election year and continuing through the primary and general elections, C-4 reports are due 21 and 7 days *before* each election and on the 10th of the month *after* the month the election was held with the candidate's name on the ballot, even if there was little or no activity to report.

See the [PDC's online calendar](#) for report due dates and all other important dates campaigns need to know.

Is the committee required to open a bank account?

Yes. State law requires that a political committee open a campaign account in a bank, credit union or savings and loan institution. The name on the account should be the political committee's name that it registers with the PDC.

Must the committee identify all contributors?

Anyone who gives you more than a total of \$25 in monetary and in-kind contributions must be identified by name and full

address. Plus, if an individual gives you more than \$100, you must also show this person's occupation and the name, city and state of his or her employer.

Is there an expenditure restriction?

The mini reporting option has an expenditure maximum of \$5,000, but no other expenditure limit exists in state law. According to statute, no expenditure may legally be made unless it's authorized by a person named on the political committee's C-1pc registration statement. Treasurers are also required to maintain a complete record of all expenditures, including obligations that have not yet been paid by the campaign.

There's probably more to reporting ... right?

Probably. It depends on how much you're going to raise and spend on the campaign.

If you choose [Mini Reporting](#) (because during the course of the election the committee will raise and spend no more than \$5,000 and won't accept more than \$500 from any contributor), the C-1pc is all you have to file. If you choose mini reporting and then realize that it's not going to work, there is a process to change to full reporting, but the completed application for changing options must be received at the PDC's office on or before the specified deadline. The limitations of the mini reporting option as well as the instructions for changing reporting options are fully explained in the PDC's [Political Committee Instructions](#).

If you're going to raise and spend over \$5,000 during the election (or less than that, but you want to accept more than \$500 from a contributor), you fall into the [Full Reporting](#) category and the political committee must file frequent contribution and expenditure reports (Forms C-3 and C-4, respectively). The committee treasurer and other officers should carefully read the [Political Committee Instructions](#).

What is political committee affiliation?

A political committee established, financed, maintained or controlled by a corporation, union, trade association, collective bargaining organization, federation of labor unions or any membership organization is automatically affiliated and shares a contribution limit with that entity. In addition, there are other structural relationships that trigger automatic affiliation and, potentially, shared contribution limits. See the Political Committee Manual for details.

A contribution by a political committee with funds that have all been contributed by one person who exercises exclusive control over the distribution of the funds of the political committee is a contribution by the controlling person. [More info ...](#)

Are there laws governing political ads?

Yes. Sponsor identification is usually required in a political ad, and, in some cases, information about the sponsoring committee's donors. Additionally, there are certain requirements for political ads about candidates. Details are fully explained in the [Political Advertising](#) section of the PDC's Political Committee instruction manual as well as the [Political Advertising brochure](#) and the [Independent Expenditures & Electioneering Communications brochure](#).

Are there other disclosure requirements besides filing reports?

Political committees must make their campaign records available for public inspection during the 10 days, excluding weekends, before any election in which the committee participates. Someone wanting to view the committee's records will use the contact information on the committee's registration to make an appointment for public inspection.

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